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sition to the very center around which all other school activities will revolve, and will prove to be the unifying factor among

all the other departments in bringing about during the next decade the reorganization of secondary education in America.

### THE TRUE AMERICANIZATION OF THE FOREIGN CHILD

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When the children of immigrants look like Americans, talk like Americans, and play like Americans, it may be taken as *prima facie* evidence that they are not being truly Americanized. It means simply that there has been an unnatural break with parental control and parental values, which must inevitably result in a character unformed and unstable. There can be no greater family tragedy than the complete reversal of the relation of parent and child, a relation as old as the human race. This reversal is seen whenever the children try to recognize only American values, while the parents still cling to Lithuanian, Polish or Italian traditions and habits. Parental guidance and filial respect are suddenly overthrown; and while we have the outward appearance of the American child, we find him in disproportionate numbers in the juvenile court.

Americanization of children must be based on the fundamental consideration that character is the one requisite in the true American; and the problem resolves itself into trying to find the best method of developing character. It becomes really a matter of reaching and molding the second generation, for the character of the adult immigrant is already formed when he reaches America, and no matter what measures are adopted, there can be little change.

To assume that this character of the adult immigrant is not fitted for American life, is often a baseless misapprehension. He has many qualities which it would be most valuable to incorporate into American life. Each nationality has developed distinctive virtues, as well as vices; and true Americanization must conserve the virtues and eliminate the vices. The practical problem is how America can do this. One can but be encouraged by the eager and

wise interest which is being so generally shown by just such people as this Conference represents.

Very few people who are close to the immigrant have any sympathy with the methods of Bismarck, though the newspapers and many superficial people urge the same practices that he employed. Bismarck was afraid of the Polish children, and he instituted a system of forcibly transforming them into Prussians. One of his methods was to forbid their learning the language of their mothers. The failure of his plan was absolute; for not only did it store up wrath between the Poles and the Germans, which cannot be allayed for generations, but—far worse—it has produced abnormal conditions among the Poles themselves. True or false, the persistent rumors of pogroms instigated by Poles, and the undeniable record of their recent conflicts with Czechs, Ukrainians and others, are evidence of their bitter heritage of ill will.

The American problem is the development of the child into a democratic character adapted to the purposes of America. This is not a simple problem, whether the children descend from old Americans or new; but the difficulties in connection with the children of foreign parents have several peculiar aspects, about which disagreements are easy, but concerning which mistakes may be almost fatal, both to the child and to the nation.

As was implied in the opening sentence, there is great danger of making too rapid a transition; and this danger is enhanced because the speedy acquisition of an American exterior is so tempting a goal.

The child of the foreign family has exceedingly difficult adjustments to make. This condition often results in extraordinary stimulations, which may tend either

to the upbuilding or the disintegration of character.

Loss of respect for parents is one of the most dangerous attitudes possible in the immigrant child, and it is equally dangerous to himself and to America. A character in "The honorable Peter Stirling," by Paul Leicester Ford, says something to this effect: "Sometimes a man marries a woman who is strong and fine, and he comes to love her biglike; but if he's the sort of man who forgets his poor old mother, who has slaved for him and done her best by him, he is not the sort of man to make a good husband."

The foreign child not only has human parents, but he has a mother country besides America; and in most cases not only his parents but his mother country have suffered from unjust discrimination and from obloquy. The child who does not enter into some sort of loyal relationship with his parents and his mother country is not the sort to make a good American citizen. The very beginning of character is in some sort of attachment. Professor Royce put loyalty as the basic virtue. He defined it as the devotion of a person to a cause. When people like the Jews, the Poles, the Czechs, and the Irish remember the age-old oppressions under which their people have suffered, annoying to us as their convictions may be, their own characters are enriched by the very enlargement of ideal which this vicarious participation implies. The child, by repudiating his identity, might escape the prejudices it awakens, both in Europe and America; but such immunity is dearly purchased by the surrender of the highest loyalties.

Forty years ago one might have seen in Boston signs reading, "Help wanted: no Irish need apply." Any Irish child today who does not resent that advertised discrimination, cannot make a good citizen of America. Every nationality suffers from some form of prejudice. It may not be entirely unjustified in some cases, but to seek to escape it, when one belongs to the group to which it inheres, is cowardly.

Often I have had the experience, in go-

ing successively among different nationalities, whose antipathies to one another are strong and whose characteristics are very distinctive, of discovering in myself both sympathy and respect for these representatives of different traditions and different religious beliefs. For a time I feared that I must be a hypocrite; but I knew that my attitude was honest, and I concluded that what I respected was the character which grew out of these various loyalties.

A year ago President Masaryk of Czecho-Slovak republic, addressing a great mass meeting of Czecho-Slovaks, said that he had noticed their attitude of profound reverence when the band played their national airs, and observing the same spirit of devotion when "The star-spangled banner" was played, he came to the conclusion that through being good Czechs, they had become good Americans.

To return to the child. He is caught by the sweep and the language of America. He first becomes ashamed of his parents, and then he feels superior to them. Nothing could be worse than the attitude of the child who said, "I am an American, born here, but my father, he is only an uneducated Italian"; or of the child who said, when his father undertook to punish him, "I won't be licked by any — foreigner."

America should be a place where all the values that contribute to democracy have free play. The struggle for freedom, which is the heritage of so many of our immigrants, is the very heart of the American ideal; and should be recognized and merged into the common life, rather than suppressed. Freedom of religion is a means to a larger spiritual realization, and the immigrant greatly enriches American life by bringing in the historic religions. These religions represent long and varied human experience in its highest aspirations, and each has developed something of permanent and genuine value; and when they can be purged of the dross of superfluity and bigotry, society will have made an incomparable spiritual advance.

The child who has no respect for his parents or for the church lacks a funda-

mental element of social control, while he is not yet equipped for self-control; and his inevitable goal is the juvenile court.

In most of the cities of the United States, half of the children speak some other language besides English. They speak this non-English tongue more freely than most college graduates ever succeed in mastering any foreign language. They have learned it without effort, and if it could be conserved, it would be one of the finest assets of American culture. The advantage of being bilingual consists not only in the added body of knowledge to which it gives access, but still more in the increased flexibility of mind, which is one of the most valuable means of mental and moral development.

In many cases the immigrant's mother tongue has been the symbol of the nationality of his people, and devotion to it has been necessary for the very national existence. To seek ruthlessly to destroy this language is as unwise as to destroy religion; for often devotion to one's mother tongue has all the characteristics of religion. The one, no less than the other, is the manifestation of the ideals of the group.

It is the business of the libraries and the librarians to understand this problem of the character of the foreign child, and to help develop it. It should never be forgotten that each nationality is unique in its history, literature and art. In the case of every group of immigrants there is a literature which represents not only a high standard of merit, but an interpretation of the peculiar genius of the people. The librarian in every community should study the particular nationality that forms its constituency, and should make a definite appeal to the children and the community

from which they come, by sympathetically promoting the best things in that group. The best books in the foreign languages should be secured and the best pictures. There should be sympathetic appreciation of the national aspirations. The library should help break down in the community the arrogant prejudice which talks about the "one-hundred-per cent American," as if he could be secured by a dead level of uniformity and superficial culture.

There is no danger that the children born in America will not learn English, and the utmost encouragement should be given them in learning it and mastering the wealth of its literature. The child who knows the language of his foreign-born parents, as well as English, is a far greater asset to America than the child who knows only the latter. John Hus represents just as fine ideals of religious freedom and the quest for truth and righteousness as the pilgrim fathers who landed on Plymouth Rock. Garibaldi is just as genuine a contributor to the things for which America stands as George Washington.

True Americanization is not superficial, but fundamental. It is the process of preparing people for a democracy in which, more and more, true values shall prevail, where bigotry and prejudice shall be reduced to a minimum. This true Americanism must be developed in both the foreign and the native child, through attachments that are natural and personal, not through those that are abstract and impersonal. We must get rid of the idea that there is anything divisive in this method. Rather, it is the only means whereby we can secure unity and coöperation, greatly enriched by the very fact of its complex variety. The task is gigantic, but no lower aim is worthy of our American history and tradition.